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## Comparative and International Education in Teacher Training Programs: The Case of North Park University in Chicago

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# Comparative and International Education in Teacher Training Programs: The Case of North Park University in Chicago

## **Abstract**

For decades, scholars have claimed the importance of implementing comparative and international education courses in teacher education programs. Although there are countless benefits of doing so, information or evidence about offering comparative and international education in the teacher education curricula, is negligible. To date, it is uncertain how many teacher education programs include such a course. The current article aims to describe how and why CIE became a required graduate level course within a teacher education program in Chicago. It also discusses the various pedagogical approaches, theories, themes, and content that were selected for the framework of this course. Lastly, the article brings forth teachers' comments and views regarding the benefits of incorporating comparative and international education in teacher education programs and how after completing the class, they perceived themselves to be more effective and globally competent teachers.

## **Keywords**

Comparative education programs; graduate programs; North Park University; teacher training programs; teacher education; teacher education curricula

# COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION IN TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS: THE CASE OF NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY IN CHICAGO

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## Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, comparative and international education has been regarded as an academic field of study within universities around the world. While never being wholly defined, comparative and international education has often been described as an amorphous field that relies on other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy, economics, history, and psychology to meet its objectives (Bereday, 1957; Kubow and Fossum, 2007). Its interdisciplinary content has widened its field and has also provided flexibility for how and within which various academic programs the subject is taught.

To date, a number of scholarly articles have reflected on the purpose, stance and contents of comparative and international education programs, including those in the book, *Comparative and International Education at Universities Worldwide* (Wolhuter, Popov, Leutwyler, Skubic, 2013). Due to much interest in the subject, the book has been rewritten twice as expanded editions, to include additional information about comparative and international education programs across the globe. A few studies comparing comparative and international education course outlines have also been performed in the past (Post, Farrell, Ross, 1995; Stone, 2005). One of the more recent sources is CIECAP - the Comparative and International Education Course Archive Project which was initiated in 2001, when Dr. Erwin Epstein began collecting comparative and international education course outlines. In collaboration with the then-doctoral student, Bruce Collet, Dr. Kathy Stone, and the Comparative and International Education Graduate Student Association (CIEGSA) at Loyola University in Chicago, a database was developed to support the collection. The CIECAP project was first introduced at the CIES 2003 Annual Meeting in New Orleans and later became endorsed by the World Council of Comparative and International Education Societies. Since its founding at Loyola University Chicago, the project has twice transferred - first to the University at Albany State University of New York and just recently to Indiana University (ciestcesig.org, n.d.).

As can be viewed on the CIECAP website, the online database contains the salient features of 70 introductory course outlines from universities around the world. It includes a description of

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the programs, the location of the universities, instructor and program information, and degree program offerings. The database also provides valuable information regarding course content, instructional material and the themes and topics covered within each course. The majority of introductory comparative education courses are most generally offered within educational foundations, leadership, and policy programs. While these programs mainly fall under the jurisdiction of colleges and schools of education, very few teacher training programs are listed as offering comparative and international education courses.

For decades, scholars have claimed the relevance of comparative and international education courses in teacher education programs. In a study performed across nine countries in North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America (Wolhuter et al, 2011), the authors refer to current research that supports the inclusion of comparative and international education within teacher education programs. According to the article, such courses can assist both teachers and students in improving their teaching practices (Bray, Adamson, and Mason, 2014; Planel, 2008 as cited in Wolhuter et al., 2011). Back in 1986, Noah stressed that when properly taught, comparative and international education can be a valuable part of teacher education programs as it provides student teachers with an understanding of how trans-national forces shape education systems. By studying comparative and international education, student teachers can also become acquainted with the impact that globalization has on education (Wolhuter, Popov, Manzon and Letwyler, 2008).

For years, Gutek (1993) has been advocating that comparative and international education prepares teacher practitioners to function in the two dimensions that they live and teach. Since teachers are citizens of particular nation states, comparative and international education helps them nurture their students' national identity. Given that teachers are also citizens of a global society, comparative and international education helps them to recognize the "possibilities for human growth, as well as problems for human survival that transcend national boundaries" (p.2). It is therefore pertinent that teachers learn to examine other cultures, classroom instruction around the world, and the ways that schools function in other countries-such can be attained through the study of comparative and international education. Furthermore, the study of comparative and international education can broaden one's perspective, sharpen one's focus, and deepen an understanding of one's own society and education system (Kubow and Fossum, 2007; Wolhuter, Popov, Manzon and Letwyler, 2008; O'Malley, 2008).

Since the last part of the twentieth century, American schools have been struggling with the increased impact of globalization - a concept that has had an influence on educational reforms from as far back as the 1960's and the 1970's (Anderson, 1968; Becker, 1979, Hanvey 1976; as cited in Hansen, 2013). According to UNESCO (2010), the ongoing process of globalization is linking people all over the world more closely together than ever before. This special interconnectedness is reflected in all we do and encounter on both the personal and social level. Darling-Hammond (2010) emphasizes how globalization is changing everything, from the way we work, communicate, and live. Suárez-Orozco (2001) argues that globalization is the reason that an unprecedented number of immigrants are entering our schools and causing the demographic fabric of our communities to change. Thus, globalization and immigration are two compelling forces that are transforming both our schools and our entire education system. Our students must be well prepared to connect and engage locally with others in the society where they live while also performing competently and globally. Connecting both locally and globally, requires that students acquire "an extensive knowledge of the world along with the skills and dispositions to engage with people from many cultures and countries" (Longview Foundation, 2008 p.3).

Whereas the changing dynamics have increased the need to educate our students on both a local and global level, our education system is failing to prepare our young people for this reality. Although the recent education reforms and Common Core Standards focus heavily on improving reading, math, and science education, Zhao (2012) insists that they do not identify global competence skills and abilities needed for preparing our students to live and interact with people from different cultures. This global preparation is also missing within our teacher training programs. Schneider states that "teacher training programs are often among the least internationalized programs on American college and university campuses" (as cited in Longview Foundation, 2008, pg.5). Even though numerous teacher candidates are participating in study abroad programs, learning a foreign language, and engaging in international events, very few are taking courses such as comparative and international education. Teacher preparation programs are not adequately producing globally, competent teachers for our increasingly interdependent world. As a result, few teachers are well prepared to educate students for this new global context. Schools of education must respond to the transformation of society and our nation's schools.

Although there are many benefits of incorporating comparative and international education courses into teacher education curricula, information or evidence about such programs is void. In fact, it is uncertain how many teacher education programs include a course on comparative and international education. The current article aims to describe how and why CIE became a required graduate level course within a teacher education program in Chicago. It also discusses the various pedagogical approaches, theories, themes, and content that were selected for the framework of this course. Lastly, the article brings forth six teachers' comments and views regarding the benefits of incorporating comparative and international education in teacher education programs and how after completing the class, these six teachers perceived themselves to be more effective and globally competent teachers.

### **Comparative and international education at North Park University**

North Park University is a four-year university located on the north side of Chicago, Illinois, in the Albany Park neighborhood. Founded in 1891 by Swedish immigrants of the Evangelical Covenant Church, the campus has grown from a two year college to a university that now enrolls more than 3,000 students from around the country and the world (Peterson, 2009). It offers a variety of bachelor's and master's degrees within a number of departments, including the School of Education which has been preparing teachers for over forty years. Within the past three years alone, more than 240 North Park undergraduate and graduate students have become certified or licensed in 15 areas. Over 150 of these graduates have become endorsed in ESL (English as a second language) and/or bilingual education (Balodimas-Bartolomei, 2015).

Since 2007, CIE-comparative and international education has been an integral part of the North Park School of Education graduate program due to the efforts of two professors, Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei and Dr. Theodore Zervas. Having completed their doctoral degree in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies at Loyola University in Chicago, both professors saw the benefits of offering a comparative and international education course on the graduate level for the study of comparative education helps one better understand one's practices (Bereday, 1964). Ideally all teacher candidates, could benefit by taking the course, however, for various reasons, it was not feasible to make it a requirement within the various school of education programs. When considering whether to offer the class on the undergraduate or graduate level, the decision was made to go with the latter due to more flexibility in scheduling along with taking in consideration that graduate students have stronger research and writing skills along with in depth and applied knowledge and focus of inquiry - all important criteria for the study of CIE.

The CIE course, designed by Professor Zervas, was unanimously accepted by both the School of Education and the Curriculum and Instructional Committee. As a result, all students within the MATC (Master of Teaching Certificate) and the MA degree in Education graduate programs were required every May, to take the 2 semester hour course during the summer mini session. For three weeks, the four hour class met two evenings a week and was taught by three professors on the main campus and at two branch locations. The class schedule and the number of credit hours assigned to CIE decision were influenced by the existing state mandated courses school calendar.

Within five years a total of 271 students successfully completed the course until 2012, when the School of Education was required to redesign its curriculum to meet the newly mandated state program requirements (Balodimas-Bartolomei, 2015). Unfortunately, comparative and international education had to be replaced with another course. It would soon however, enter another School of Education program - the MALLC (Masters of literacy, language and culture program) – which specializes in ESL and bilingual teacher education. Before describing the MALLC program, it is necessary to first look at the current situation of ESL and bilingual education not only within Illinois but also throughout our entire country.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), it is estimated that 4.4 million English language learners were enrolled in American public schools, (pre-K through grade 12), during the 2011-2012 school year. On a nationwide level, English language learners, represent ten percent of the total public school enrollment and are among the fastest-growing segment of the student population, especially within grades seven through twelve (Batalova & Fix, 2009). Illinois public schools, which are home to speakers of at least 138 distinct languages, rank fifth nationally among school populations classified as ELLs-English Language Learners (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013). Nearly 80 percent speak Spanish as their native language with the remaining 20 percent speaking Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Korean, Russian, Arabic and other languages (Calderon, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011). North Park is situated in Albany Park, one of the most culturally diverse, immigrant neighborhoods of Chicago. Many of the residents are from India, Pakistan, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and Eastern Europe. As many as 40 distinct languages are spoken in nearby schools (Centro Autonomo, n.d.).

The composition of ELL students in classrooms around the country is very diverse for they are “a highly heterogeneous and complex group of students” (NCTE, 2008, p. 2). While usually being referred to as students whose first language is something other than English, there is no one profile or simply category of ELLS. They can be: (1) long term English learners who are second-generation, U.S. born citizens, (2) special education students, (3) migrant students lacking English proficiency because their previous education was interrupted due to their parents being seasonal “follow the crops” migrant workers, (3) transnational English learners who return back to their native countries where they attend school for a short duration of the school year, (4) recent immigrants who can be either highly schooled or whose formal education was interrupted for two or more years before arriving in the United States, (5) Refugee children who have never had an education (Calderon, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011). While many schools in America provide some type of ESL or bilingual services, ELL students mostly remain in the mainstream classroom. Without proper training in ESL, elementary and secondary teachers face many challenges in teaching the diverse groups of ELL students.

To address the needs of this fast growing and complex English language population, more school districts across the states are requiring elementary and secondary school teachers to obtain an ESL/bilingual education endorsement as an add-on to their existing teaching license. Several

universities offer coursework leading to the endorsement at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as, master degrees in the area of study. In Illinois, ESL and bilingual teachers need to take five specific courses in theoretical foundations, methods, linguistics, sociolinguistics and assessment. In addition to acquiring the appropriate training and knowledge for supporting oral language development and academic growth, it is essential that prospective ESL teachers “accept, explore, and understand different perspectives and be prepared as citizens of a multicultural and global society” (Sampson & Collins, 2012, p. 11). Standard 1 of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (ISBE, 2013) emphasizes, under the framework of teaching diverse students, that “*The Competent teacher understands the diverse characteristics and abilities of each student and how individuals develop and learn within the context of their social, economic, cultural, linguistic and academic experiences.*”

North Park has a long history of preparing effective educators for multicultural classrooms through ESL and bilingual endorsement programs. Since 2012, its school of education has been leading the way in Illinois with the multifaceted MALLC (Master of Literacy, Language and Culture) Degree Program, designed for current elementary and secondary teachers who work with linguistically and culturally diverse learners. To date, only one other university in Illinois offers a multifaceted degree program that includes classes in ESL, bilingual education, literacy education and comparative international education.

According to Dr. Rebecca Nelson (2012), dean of the North Park University School of Education:

"This degree, providing advanced certification, meets the needs of classroom teachers who need to know how to teach students who are now in their classrooms versus 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago. Teachers are always looking to increase their skills, and increase their effectiveness in terms of delivery to students. This is a perfect example of a training program that provides skills for classroom teachers to evolve to the next level."

When the MALLC program was first launched in 2012, comparative and international education was not a part of the curriculum. One year later, it was decided that the required thesis paper would be eliminated and replaced with a course that would complement the existing program. Immediately Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, coordinator of the program, considered adopting the comparative and international education course that had been dropped from the other graduate programs, but knew that both the School of Education and the Curriculum and Instructional Committee would need a rationale for doing so. How could comparative and international education enhance the MALLC program? How could the course enable teachers to teach more effectively? How did it meet the objectives of the MALLC program while also complementing the existing ESL, bilingual and literacy courses? The justifications for implementing CIE into the MALLC program were based on several of the previously mentioned reasons for implementing the course into teacher preparation programs.

Comparative and international education appeared to be the missing link for the MALLC program. Up until now, teachers in this program were getting trained in ESL, bilingualism, literacy and multicultural education. All of the classes were preparing them to work with immigrant students and to teach more effectively on a local level. By taking the comparative and international education course, the teachers would be developing extensive knowledge and international perspectives on a global level. Upon completion of the degree program, the graduates would be

better equipped to be both, locally and globally competent teachers. Once again, the proposal was accepted unanimously and comparative and international education became a required graduate course in the School of Education.

### **The MALLC comparative and international education course framework**

The MALLC program is designed for current elementary and secondary teachers who are seeking a Master's Degree and the ESL/bilingual endorsements. Its goal is to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, strategies and means for working with the growing numbers of English learners in their classrooms. Through extensive training in ESL, bilingualism, multiculturalism, literacy, and comparative and international education, the teachers become well equipped with skills for meeting the English language and literacy needs of their students and ensuring progress towards full English language proficiency. The program also strives in helping teachers to develop skills for fostering global awareness and cultural understanding among their students by examining and comparing transnationals issues of education across the globe. In order to achieve the program goals, teachers are required to complete 34 semester hours of courses, which typically can be completed within about two and a half years. Classes are offered in evenings or on Saturdays throughout the school year and during summer sessions. The program consists of the following eleven courses plus one practicum:

Course	Sem. Hours
<b>EDUC 5120: Multicultural Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EDUC 5140: Comparative and International Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>EDUC 5540: ESL Practicum</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>EDUC 5601: Introduction to Linguistics</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EDUC 5602: Sociolinguistics and Cross Cultural Differences</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EDUC 5603: Theoretical Foundations of Teaching ESL &amp; Foreign Languages</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EDUC 5604: Assessment of ESL and Bilingual Students</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EDUC 5605: Methods &amp; Materials for Teaching ESL &amp; Foreign Languages</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EDUC 5606: Foundations of Bilingual Education</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EDUC 5607: Methods &amp; Materials for Teaching Bilingual Students</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EDUC 5610: Culture and Literacy for ELL and Bilingual Students</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EDUC 5615: Methods for ELL and Bilingual Students</b>	<b>3</b>

Before implementing comparative education into the MALLC program, some minor changes were necessary with the course content. To provide ESL teachers with a clearer understanding of global educational issues pertaining to language and minority education, additional topics and themes needed to be added. Whereas the original course syllabus that was designed by Zervas in 2007, was slightly modified, the university and course outcomes, catalog description, and statement of the course purpose remained as follows.

#### ***University and course outcomes:***

**North Park Outcomes:** The very nature of this course is designed around the outcomes of inquiry, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The purpose of the course is to help students develop these skills when investigating and comparing international systems of education. Due to the strong emphasis of student participation and student written work this course will also help students develop their written as well as oral skills.

**Major Outcomes:** As stated in the syllabus, among other things, this course is about helping students think critically in terms of their role as educators. In other words, what role does education and teachers play in the global community of education? What impact does education have on the national and international level? As our world is becoming more and more globalized so is our community of educators. Ideas on education are more easily shared and systems of educations are sometimes transferred within nations and among nations.

***University catalogue course description:***

EDUC 5140: This course examines the application of historiographic and social scientific theories and methods to international issues of education. This course emphasizes comparative analysis of policies and practices that constitute the organization, content, processes of education systems and institutions found around the world. Selected topics include national, global, political, economic, social and cultural impact of education. Historical and contemporary examples are also used to emphasize the contributions and challenges of those involved in the field.

***Course Purpose:*** Comparative and international education is designed to:

- Provide students with an overview of Comparative and international education and to the works and accomplishments of the influential scholars in the field.
- Examine significant problems and trends of schooling in a variety of countries.
- Analyze theoretical and methodical issues concerning education.
- Consider the implications of comparative studies for the formation and implementation of policies not only in education but in social, national and international development.
- Investigate the social, political, and economic forces that shape education in both developed and developing countries.
- To offer a process through which students can reflect on their own education and seek to understand and accept the processes and outcomes of education in other societies.

As in the past, the two semester hour comparative and international education course is offered every May during the summer mini session. For three weeks, the four hour class is conducted two evenings a week. Depending on the assigned night of the class, the total number of classes will consist of either five or six sessions. If the class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays, the total number of sessions will be five, due to Memorial Day which falls on Monday. Given that the class meets for only five or six sessions, creating both the course structure and schedule were rather complicated. In addition to time constraints, the ambiguous and unclear concept and definition of comparative and international education added to the challenges. What could, would and should we cover in such a short time?

According to Mazurek and Winzer (2006), comparative education courses fall into two categories-survey courses that introduce the students to the field of comparative studies through the examination of case studies, and courses that focus on specific, contemporary, global education issues. The authors state that most textbooks are tailored to the latter type of course. It must be noted that Mazurek and Winzer do not include the word "international" in their description of the term. Marshall (2014) states that although the term, comparative education is often used

interchangeably with international education, the two overlapping fields are quite diverse. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2007) assert that "Comparative and international education, by virtue of being associated in one phrase by 'and' are taken to be implicitly separate" (p. 7). They argue that absurdly and wrongly, comparative studies are frequently associated with the industrialized western world, whereas international education is often implied as the study within developing countries. The authors blame the titles and focus of books, journals, and the nature of university courses for the problems in usage of this term. Arnove and Torres (2007) state that historically, "the field of comparative and international education has comprehended three principal dimensions or thrusts...the scientific, pragmatic, and international global understanding" (p.3). Erwin Epstein (1994) refers to comparative education as "a field of study that applies historical, philosophical and social science theories and methods to international problems in education" (p.918). Kubow and Fossum (2007) refer to comparative education as "the study of education from cross-cultural, cross national perspectives," (p.6) that "entails an examination of the similarities and differences of various national education systems and structures" (p. 22).

Multiple steps were taken towards meeting both the university and course objectives which included determining the main topics and themes to be covered, the organizational scheme, appropriate teaching strategies for accomplishing the course objectives, and structuring both the course and its schedule. To facilitate with the organization and sequencing of the course content, it was decided that a core textbook would be adopted for the class. Whereas a number of fine textbooks are readily available, it was critical that the selected text meet the objectives of the short term, three week introductory course. The book would need to include case studies and educational issues that teachers could relate to while also containing a simplified approach to what the field of comparative and international education is all about including theory, inquiry and methods. "*Comparative Education. Exploring Issues in International Context*" (Kubow & Fossum, 2007), appeared to be the right choice for such a course. In addition to a number of pedagogical features, the book includes side-by side comparisons of education systems from around the world along with also focusing on specific issues or "dilemmas", as referred to by the authors that such systems encounter.

Similar to the previously taught comparative education courses in the School of Education, the structure of the current course resembles the two types of courses outlined by Mazurek and Winzer. It includes an introduction to the field of comparative and international education while also presenting case studies that examine various education systems, structures and specific issues of schooling throughout the world. All students are expected, in a group, to summarize and present a chapter from the textbook through a power point presentation. Students often incorporate a YouTube video pertaining to a specific country or theme. When presenting a chapter that examines a specific country, students are required to include a diagram chart illustrating the country's education system. After each chapter presentation, students are encouraged to conduct a class discussion covering the presented material. The textbook's focusing and reflection questions may be and usually are integrated.

The class involves a combination of lecture and discussions. Students are expected to complete weekly reading assignments and to participate in class discussions related to the readings. The class also involves in-class projects and activities. As a result, classroom participation is vital in this course. Handouts, movies, and YouTube videos are also used to complement book chapters and additional material. Motivational guest speakers are often brought into the classroom to speak about various education systems throughout the world. The class schedule and syllabus have been organized around the three parts of the textbook as follows:

Part one, "*Comparative Education and Underlying Assumptions about Education: The Comparative Approach*," consists of two chapters which are presented on the first night of class through power point presentations. Chapter one introduces students to the field, purpose and development of comparative and international education. In addition to text information, the power point also includes a slide on CIES (Comparative and International Education Society). To familiarize students with the historical roots of comparative education within universities, the article Comparative and International Education: Overview and Historical Development (Epstein, 1994) is assigned for homework. Subsequently, students have the opportunity to learn about theoretical bases that have been used to interpret educational policies, events, and practices in the power point designed for Chapter 2. Especially important in this class is that teachers develop an understanding about the German concept Weltanschauung, "worldview", while also becoming aware of how seeing, knowing the world around us, and teaching, are all influenced by our own value system. It is this worldview that will also impact their perceptions of other school systems, people and the way that they relate to their students (Gutek, 1997). The class session continues with the viewing of *Back to School in Afghanistan* (CBS, 2002) - a film that reveals the "precarious condition of Afghanistan's schools after years of Mujahideen and Taliban control" (Films Media Group, n.d.). Low school enrollment especially among girls, textbooks containing violent images of war and killing, and the stance of girls' education are all highlighted in this video.

Part two, "*Education in International Context: A Comparative Approach Applied to Contemporary Educational Issues*," includes four chapters that examine issues related to the education systems of eight different countries. Each chapter highlights an educational dilemma within two specific countries. During the second class session, students present power points that demonstrate how diverse purposes of schooling shape educational curriculum in Hong Kong and Israel (Chapter 3), and the limitations that youth encounter for educational access and opportunity in Brazil and South Africa (Chapter 4). In addition to examining these four countries, a large portion of class time is devoted to learning about the Finnish education system. This is the opportune time to introduce students to the worldwide study PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) that is conducted every three years, among anywhere between 40 and 70 countries. By showing two YouTube clips, and the film "The Finland Phenomenon: Inside the World's Most Surprising School System" (Faust, 2011), the students gain an understanding about Finland's academic success and why so many regard its education system as utopian. A lively class discussion always evolves, as students reflect upon the many elements that comprise Finland's extraordinary education system such as: highly regarded and respected teachers; parent involvement in education; classroom inclusion of all students; the absence of standardized testing; and so much more. Throughout the three week comparative education course, students constantly refer to Finland when discussing and examining other countries' educational issues and dilemmas.

The third class session, which is structured around Chapters 5 and 6, focuses on education accountability and authority in England and Germany (Chapter 5) and teacher professionalism in Japan and the USA (Chapter 6). As with the previously presented countries, students have the opportunity to examine the historical and political forces that have impacted education in these four countries along with learning about the differences between centralized and decentralized schooling. Once again, the last portion of the class is devoted to viewing a film. In this class session, students are introduced to Wide Angle's award winning *Time for School*, a 12 year documentary project that follows seven children from seven different countries - Afghanistan, Benin, Brazil, India, Japan, Kenya, and Romania. Part one of the series, highlights these children on their first day of school and offers a glimpse into the difficult life circumstances that hinder so

many children from receiving a basic education. According to Wide Angle PBS (2009 as cited in WNET, 2015)

"These children's stories put a human face on the shocking fact that more than 75 million children are currently out of school; of these, two thirds are girls. One in four children in developing countries does not complete five years of basic education, and there are nearly one billion illiterate adults — one-sixth of the world's people. WIDE ANGLE plans to continue revisiting all the children, and their peers and families, through 2015, the year they should graduate — and, not coincidentally, the U.N.'s target date for achieving universal education, a Millennium Development goal endorsed by all 191 members of the United Nations."

The fourth comparative education class introduces part three of the textbook, *"Interpreting Educational Issues: Local-Global Comparison and the Use of Analytic Frameworks."* This section reviews the frameworks that were used in comparing and examining the four selected themes in the second portion of the text. Chapter 7, *Applying Frameworks to Analyze Educational Issues*, demonstrates how teachers can use the four frameworks as an aid when investigating and analyzing various educational issues in domestic, localized and international contexts. The frameworks provide a means for our teachers to examine issues that arise in their very own classrooms. Since each dilemma may yield to multiple responses, teacher educators quickly come to realize the ambiguity that exists in such situations. Teachers are reminded that historical, social, cultural, political and economic factors affect such issues. Once again, the four frameworks are used in this chapter, to analyze dilemmas with homework, standardized testing and moral education - topics which always lead to deep discussions among the experienced teachers. In *Globalization and Implications for Education* (Chapter 8), Kubow and Fossum discuss the implications of globalization and the impact it has had on education, cultural beliefs, behaviors, and the previously addressed issues in part two. Following the chapter power point presentations and discussions, the second part of Time for School is shown. Filmed three years after the first episode, this version seeks to update the progress of the seven children's educational and personal development. The disparities and challenges that a number of these youth have encountered, provides rich insight into the worldwide problem of providing an education for all.

As previously mentioned since class five falls on Memorial Day weekend, it is designated as a study night allowing students to work on their final project-the comparative research paper. Students are responsible for writing a 3000-4000 word research paper in which they analyze one education system and then compare and contrast a specific theme within both the selected country's system and the American System. The research paper should include the following components: (1) an introduction and brief overview of the selected country, (2) the history, legislation, governance and administration of the school system including mention of whether the system is centralized or decentralized, the general objectives and mission statement of the education system, the status of private education and if it is grant aided and recognized by the government throughout all the tiers of education, (3) a description of the tiered structure of the system including age levels and grouping of children; compulsory school attendance, the organization of school time including the duration of the school year and teaching hours. (4) a brief discussion concerning the availability of foreign language instruction, special needs education and

bilingual or immigrant education, (5) national assessment (6) teacher training and preparation including a summary on duration of teaching program and the type of teaching degree granted, (7) a section on tertiary education, (8) recent educational developments and reforms, and lastly (8) a comparative theme in which the student compares a theme of interest between the selected country and the United States, e.g. foreign language teaching in Italy and the USA. Students are also encouraged to select a theme focusing on aforementioned material covered in class from the textbook, movies and class discussions. To date, the majority of the students have either selected to research the home country of one of their existing students or their very own ancestral country.

### **Final Class and Student Comments**

The fifth and last class provides closure to the comparative and international education class. During this session, students present their country project through a brief power point presentation. Time permitting, part three of the Time for School series is shown, if not, students can leisurely view the film online at a further date. The final portion of the class is spent reflecting and discussing the ideas, concepts and information that were presented during the course. Students re-examine the objectives and goals of the syllabus and then evaluate their own progress on these items.

To date, CIE has been offered three times (2012-2014) since it became a required class in the MALLC program. The classes have consisted of both, students from the MALLC program, and students who belonged to one of the former school of education MA programs that required all students to take CIE. All of the students in the MALLC were practicing licensed teachers whereas those from the MA programs were mixed-some of which were also practicing licensed teachers while others were still in the process of becoming so. The average class size was about twenty. Unfortunately, as enrollments in teacher-preparation throughout the nation continue to fall, the MALLC program has also been experiencing a low enrollment rate. Thus far, only thirteen MALLC have enrolled in the course with numbers projected to remain low in the next offered course.

Although there has never been a study performed on the students' impressions of CIE at North Park, an electronic email was sent out to eighteen current teachers who still are in contact with their former professor. All of the teachers had previously taken the course at North Park throughout the past three years, while studying either in the MALLC or another school of education MA program. Those in the latter program also completed the ESL/Bilingual teacher education program. While only six students responded to the email, and the responses cannot certainly be considered a study, their comments, thoughts, and perspectives are worth sharing and including in this article.

The first question asked participants why they thought that ESL teachers or teachers in general, should study comparative and international education. Whereas all of the respondents stated that it is extremely important and vital that all teachers take the course, two in particular expressed that CIE helps teachers interact and connect better with their students. Teachers who take the course can reach their students and also their students' parents, if they know something about the education system from the country in which they have come. According to a few other teachers, when you learn and know more about the rapport teachers have with their students in another country, you can better relate to your own students. Studying comparative education not only gives teachers an insight as to different educational programs, methodologies, and philosophies, it also helps them understand their students' behavior in class, and why parents or certain cultural groups have various opinions about the American educational system. Another

teacher responded that studying CIE serves as a teaching tool because when one learns about different ways and methods of teaching in other lands it can be helpful in teaching and understanding the ELL students in class. Lastly, one teacher expressed how the course can help teachers' develop better social-emotional skills making them more compassionate and empathetic to their students. Thus the responses demonstrated that CIE not only serves as a teaching tool, it also helps teachers improve student relationships by making meaningful and real connections with students and their parents.

The second question asked the teachers how the CIE class improved their teaching and provided them with a better understanding of ESL/immigrant students? The wide ranging responses reiterated that what comparativists have been stressing throughout the years - comparative and international education offers a view from a different lens. One teacher commented how North Park's comparative education class was fascinating and thought-provoking. All of the teacher respondents stated that they had diverse populations in their classrooms and mentioned numerous ways that the CIE course not only facilitated them in teaching these students but that it also helped them become more sensitive by providing them with a better understanding of where their students came from. Learning about different educational systems was an eye opener because it gave the teachers the opportunity to see how education systems function around the world. It helped them understand different countries' views on education and the important roles that history, culture, and politics play in shaping educational priorities. The course also enabled the teachers to make connections with their immigrant students by studying about the education system in their native lands, and to conceptualize the impact that their previous educational experiences might have on them. One teacher explained how after taking this class, she now emphasizes to her students the importance of learning and how they all have the potential to learn whether it is on their own or from one another in class.

Another teacher described how after taking the class, she was able to help students make connections to concepts by connecting them with pictures or examples they are familiar with from their culture. She referred to one of her students who had recently arrived from Pakistan. The teacher found out where he was originally from and then researched the school that he attended along with his neighborhood and culture. Having seen images of the school and his previous neighborhood, she thought he might be overwhelmed and over stimulated by all the colors and objects in their classroom so she arranged for him to visit the classroom with his parents on a day when his classmates would not be in the room so that he could take time and explore the new environment. She believes that all of these incentives helped him feel more comfortable in the new school environment.

Two teachers pointed out how the class better prepared them to teach their South Korean students. The one teacher felt that after researching about the Korean school system for her final project, she was able to better understand her students' culture of education. As a result she began adapting and modifying her instruction to meet these students' individual needs. The other teacher affirmed that the research component of this course helped her to attain resources and to learn about acquiring support services for her students through cultural organizations in the USA. Additionally, the teacher learned how to go beyond Wikipedia by actually reaching out to educators in other countries who were the authors from the research articles that she had read for her final class project on Jordan. Through her correspondence she was able to discuss educational issues and dilemmas with educators across the globe.

The last question asked the teachers why they thought it was important to learn about other educational systems. Their answers brought forth a number of interesting perspectives while also

supporting previous scholars' claims on the benefits of including CIE in teacher preparation programs. By comparing and contrasting different education systems along with the German concept *Weltanschauung*, "worldview," the teachers were able to not only learn about different educational systems but to also learn and think more about our own American system of education. One teacher stated that learning about other systems opened her mind to the fact that the USA doesn't necessarily have the best system. By seeing this, future teachers can come up with ideas on how to improve the present system and may help drive change within the school they are at. One teacher emphasized how her appreciation of education has grown more since taking the CIE class. By viewing the class films, she couldn't bear to see the poor children struggling to go to school when we have it so easy, while another teacher added that this helped her understand that education is not an equal opportunity for all in other countries. On the other hand, learning about successful education systems served as inspiration to several of these teachers. One teacher found the segments on Finland and Japan so fascinating, leaving her with the desire to teach in other parts of the world.

Lastly, all of the teacher respondents expressed their appreciation and gratitude for offering this class. One teacher admitted that she, like the other teachers, would have never done the research on her own and therefore would never have found out the importance of education throughout the world. The CIE class has really taught her what matters to others doesn't really matter to us. Another teacher expressed her gratefulness in that CIE not only forced her to think about how she can get her students to reach academic goals, but to also teach her students social emotional skills required to create more thoughtful individuals. Finally, one respondent admitted that she came into class not knowing what to expect, but left 3 weeks later with an appreciation for the different educational systems that exist around the world. "I should thank you! You opened my eyes to look critically at educational systems around the world. Your love for your field of study is evident," wrote another.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate how comparative and international education became a required graduate level course within a teacher education program in Chicago. It explained how the program was initiated along with the steps taken in designing and determining the main topics and themes to be covered in the course content and syllabus. It also presented the organizational scheme, format and appropriate teaching strategies, material, and the textbook used for accomplishing the course objectives. One of the main purposes of this paper was to advocate how and why comparative and international education can and should become a required course in schools of education and how it provides teachers with the means of becoming more effective and globally competent teachers.

While a mere listing of a few teacher testimonials does not validate that the course was useful and effective, it does provide the reader with some feedback. According to the above comments, all teachers should take a comparative education class because, it helps them become more empathic and understanding of their students. It also gives them a better idea of how diverse education systems function around the globe. Learning about education systems helps open one's mind to different modes of instruction thus enabling the teachers to understand their immigrant students' educational backgrounds. The thought provoking course not only helped these six teachers gain extensive knowledge and international perspectives about schooling and educational issues from around the world, it also provided them with additional skills and experience for addressing the diversity among students in their classrooms. Based on the comments, these six

teachers feel that after taking this class, they are now better prepared to teach in a more global context.

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## Appendix

Classes	Topics/Class Schedule
1st Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the course objectives, text and requirements.</li> <li>• Defining comparative education terms.</li> <li>• Power Point-Introduction-What is comparative and international education. The power point discusses the course at North Park University and also introduces students to the CIES (Comparative and International Education Society).</li> <li>• Power Point: Chapter 1- Comparative Education</li> <li>• Power Point: Chapter 2-Theory in Comparative Education</li> <li>• In-Class Handout &amp; Discussion: Comparative and International Education: Overview and Historical Development, E. H. Epstein.</li> <li>• Movie: Back to School in Afghanistan</li> </ul>
2nd Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3-Education in International Context: A Comparative Approach Applied to Contemporary Educational Issues-Hong Kong &amp; Israel</li> <li>• Chapter 4-Educational Access Opportunity-South Africa &amp; Brazil</li> <li>• Handouts: Diagram Charts of the four education systems</li> <li>• YouTube: Finland-Class Discussion  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIYHWpRR4vc">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIYHWpRR4vc</a>  <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdYxqRce_s&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntdYxqRce_s&amp;feature=related</a> </li> <li>• Movie: The Finland Phenomenon</li> </ul>
3rd Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chapter 5</b>-Educational Accountability and Authority-<b>Germany/England</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 6</b>-Teacher Professionalism- <b>Japan/United States</b></li> <li>• <b>Movie -Time for School-Part 1</b></li> </ul>
4th class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chapter 7</b>-Applying Educational Issues: Local-Global Comparison and the Use of Analytic Frameworks</li> <li>• <b>Chapter 8</b>-Globalization and Implications for Education</li> <li>• <b>Movie-Time for School-Part 2</b></li> </ul>
No Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorial Day-No Class - Study/Project Night</li> </ul>
5th Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Class Presentations</b></li> <li>• <b>Movie-Time for School-Part 3</b></li> </ul>